

The Road From Jerusalem To Ephesus (Part 2)

August 30, 2009

“You Will Be My Witnesses In Jerusalem...”

This morning we shall explore the rest of the first leg of Jesus mission for His friends as they are witnesses of Him in Jerusalem.

Next week we shall look at the movement of the gospel in the surrounding are of Judea & Samaria...and the following week on into the ends of the earth, including Ephesus – as we prepare to study together Paul’s great letter to the Christians in the city of Ephesus, know as Ephesians.

How did Christianity spread throughout the world after Jesus went back to heaven in the 1st century? How did “Church” really begin?

Consider

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.**"

(John 3:1-8 ESV)

We recall the great commission that Jeus gave His friends in Mt 28:

And Jesus came and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"

(Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

and His last instructions for them as He returns to heaven and is taken up in a cloud before them.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "**you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**" So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit**

has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(Acts 1:4-8 ESV)

So let's strap on our seatbelts as we journey around Jerusalem?

What kinds of things do we find in chs 1-7

1. Jesus' instructions leading the way!
2. Devotion to prayer
3. God giving the Spirit, dwelling in His people
4. Great signs & wonders
5. Boldness in proclaiming the gospel
6. Deep conviction of sin
7. Receiving the promise of the Spirit
8. Being born again – so you can see & enter the Kingdom of God Jn. 3
9. Forgiveness of sin
10. Healing
11. Enduring opposition and threatening
12. Respond in worship of God, praise and prayer
13. Persevering in the mission
14. Unity among believers
15. Love for the brothers/ sisters
16. Sharing of worldly goods
17. Trust in spiritual leadership
18. Dealing with sin
19. Signs wonders healings (shadow of Peter brings healing)
20. Enduring further opposition (courage to continue in Jesus' mission)
21. Freedom from prison (miraculous escapes)
22. Enduring being beat for Jesus' sake
23. Effective Body ministry
24. Pastoral prioritizing
25. Scriptural defence of the gospel, from Genesis to Revelation!
26. Being killed for Jesus!
27. Echoing His words: receive my spirit & forgive them...

Are these characteristics of the Kingdom of God?

The disciples ask Jesus a very important question here, don't they?

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

And how you see Jesus answer it makes all the difference in how you may approach the unfolding drama in Acts and also the rest of the new testament.

The way Jesus answers this question is one of mystery, wisdom and profound genius!

If we go back in time we read things like this:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

(Genesis 3:15 ESV)

and to Abraham:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(Genesis 12:1-3 ESV)

To Isaac:

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,

(Genesis 26:1-4 ESV)

To Jacob:

Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

(Genesis 28:14 ESV)

If we go to the future we read things like this:

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

Revelation 21 & 22

Could Jesus be answering them like this:

Yes, the Kingdom is among you. I am the King of this Kingdom!

This Kingdom is inaugurated, begun already with the coming of the Spirit!

It will not be completed until the future.

The Kingdom is ALREADY among you and NOT YET fulfilled in its fullness!

When you are brought back to the fall of 2004, is there anything that you immediately think of?

How many of us sat at the edge of our seats, not knowing what is about to unfold before us as Major League Baseball history is made, and our beloved Boston Red Sox are about to break the infamous “Curse of the Bambino”?

Recall the 2004 ALCS against the Evil Empire, The New York Yankees:

Games 1-7

Anti-climactic World Series Championship vs. The St. Louis Cardinals!

Pics of Veritek & Foulke embrace / team celebration

What may you have felt if you had the ability to see the future now?

Could that bring you some degree of hope and encouragement? Rest? Knowing what’s to come in the future and rejoicing now...not just over a game, but in real life?

How might seeing the future now empower you to live in a manner worthy of the calling you have received from God? How might knowing the soon outcome of life help you and sustain you in the midst of advancing the gospel mission, enduring opposition, facing severe persecution and even the ultimate sacrifice in martyrdom, dying for the cause of Christ?

As we continue to explore how the gospel of Jesus gets from Jerusalem to Ephesus, please consider that the kingdom of God, that Kingdom that comes into sight at the new birth and entrance happens on that day....

So that you already and not yet partake in The Kingdom of the King!